

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2996, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

Mr. POLIS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 111-184) on the resolution (H. Res. 578) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2996) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2647 and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 572 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2647.

□ 2241

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2647) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2010 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2010, and for other purposes, with Mr. ALTMIRE in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. McKEON) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 2647, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010. The House Armed Services Committee brings before the House a bill reported out of committee by a vote of 61-0. This consensus was achieved after a great deal of hard work. Our mark lasted almost 17 hours. We considered

129 amendments; we adopted 107 of them. We had an excellent debate on the issues in the best traditions of our committee. I am confident we will have a similar experience here in the full House.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be joined in support of the bill by my friend and my partner, BUCK McKEON. I am thrilled that he is our ranking member, and I commend him for jumping in head first on his first official day on the job, which of course was a full day for our markup. He has been a very able and constructive partner as well as, when required, a skilled opponent. I must, however, mention our esteemed colleague, JOHN McHUGH, who has agreed to become the Secretary of the Army, but who leaves our committee having established a lasting legacy, especially on issues of personnel.

In this debate we will consider, and I am confident that we will adopt, an amendment that is sponsored by both Mr. McKEON and me that is a tribute to the work of JOHN McHUGH on our committee.

Likewise, I must thank the subcommittee chairmen and ranking members who contributed so much on this bill. They did their homework, and I am pleased with the outcome of our efforts. They solved almost every problem set out for them, and they accomplished a lot of good government at the same time.

□ 2245

They were ably assisted by our committee staff, the amazing professionals in the Office of the Legislative Counsel, and the Office of the Parliamentarian.

This bill authorizes \$550.5 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense and the national security programs of the Department of Energy. The bill also authorizes \$130 billion to support ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan during fiscal year 2010. These amounts are essentially equal to the President's budget request for items in the jurisdiction of our committee.

H.R. 2647 reflects the Congress' deep commitment to supporting American servicemembers and providing the necessary resources to keep Americans safe. The bill provides our military personnel with a 3.4 percent pay raise, an increase of .5 percent above the President's request. The bill also includes a number of initiatives to support military families. In this, the Year of the Military Family, we provide funds to establish a Center for Care for military members and their families. We also increase the weight allowance for senior noncommissioned officers, and authorize the transportation of a second vehicle for members who are changing stations from or to a nonforeign area outside the United States. The bill also provides funding to enhance the Health Professions Scholarship program for mental health providers to support the troops and their families.

The mark fully funds the President's budget request for military training, equipment, maintenance, and facilities upkeep. By doing so, the committee continues its efforts to address readiness shortfalls that have developed over the past 8 years.

To address some of these concerns in this mark, we have added \$1.6 billion to operation and maintenance, including \$395 million for Navy aviation and ship depot maintenance, \$762 million to achieve 100 percent of the requirement for sustainment of facilities, including the Department of Defense schools, which, by the way, are excellent, and \$450 million to improve the quality of Army training barracks.

The war in Afghanistan is a critical mission that is finally getting the attention it demands, and I've been saying that for quite some time. To ensure our strategy in both countries is effective and achieves the intended goals within well-defined timelines, the bill requires the President to assess American efforts and regularly report on progress. It also authorizes the new Pakistan Counter-Insurgency Fund to allow our commanders to help Pakistan quickly and more effectively go after the terrorists in their safe havens.

On Iraq, the committee supports the President's policy while also upholding the Congress' responsibility to provide oversight to the process of drawing down the mountain of material purchased, transported and built up in Iraq at tremendous expense to the taxpayer.

In the area of nonproliferation, the bill increases funding and creates new authorities to strengthen the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction program. The bill also fully supports the Department of Energy's nonproliferation programs, and adds substantial funding in support of the President's plan to secure and remove all known vulnerable nuclear materials that can be used for weapons.

The bill takes additional steps on acquisition reform beyond what we did in the bill on weapons acquisition which was enacted and signed into law by the President last month.

It also ensures that the Quadrennial Defense Review currently being undertaken by the Department of Defense both complies with the law and gives Congress the insight it needs to make judgments about force structure and programmatic changes.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, I believe this bill can be supported by every Member of this House. I recognize that some who have deep objections to current defense policy on various issues may feel compelled maybe to oppose the bill. That's their right, of course. But even in most of those cases, I believe that solid progress is made in this bill toward protecting our national security in the right way.

I ask Members to vote for H.R. 2647, for our troops and their families, and for a strong national defense for our Nation.